

Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge  
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Loess Bluffs

## *National Wildlife Refuge Amphibian and Reptile List*



## Welcome!

Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1935, is located in the lower Missouri River ecosystem in northwestern Missouri. The 7,440 acre refuge includes approximately 6,700 acres of floodplain that is managed as wetland, grassland, and riparian habitats. While the primary purpose of the refuge is to provide habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds, 35 species of amphibians and reptiles are known to occur on the varied habitats of the refuge. The range of a number of additional species includes the refuge, although they have not been documented there.

## Amphibians and Reptiles

Common and scientific names are based on B. I. Crother (2008), Scientific and standard English names of amphibians and reptiles of North America north of Mexico, with comments regarding confidence in our Understanding. Committee on Standard English and Scientific Names. SSAR Herpetological Circular 29.

Information on size and habitats were taken from T. R. Johnson (2000), The Amphibians and Reptiles of Missouri, and from R. Conant (1958), A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of the United States and Canada East of the 100th Meridian.

## Amphibians

Amphibians are cold-blooded vertebrates with no external scales, and usually a moist skin. They lay jelly-coated eggs in water and go through a metamorphosis during development. They are adapted to a life on both water and land. This group consists of salamanders, frogs, and toads.



*Salamander;*  
M. Jeffords©

## Salamanders

### Small-mouthed Salamander

(*Ambystoma texanum*)

4 - 5 ½". Frequently found under rocks, logs, boards, or other debris near ponds, swamps, or river bottoms. Common on bottom lands.

### Eastern Tiger Salamander

(*Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum*)

7 - 8 ¼". Found in a variety of habitats including woodlands, swamps, prairies and old fields near ponds. Common on uplands.

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## Frogs & Toads

### Blanchard's Cricket Frog

(*Acris crepitans blanchardi*)

5/8 - 1". Found along the open edges of ponds or streams. Abundant.

### Eastern American Toad

(*Bufo americanus americanus*)

2 - 3". Found in a wide range of habitats, preferring rocky, wooded areas, including the edges of hardwood forests, with shallow bodies of water in which to breed. Rare.

### Great Plains Toad

(*Bufo cognatus*)

1 7/8 - 3". Often found in river bottoms or flood plains. Often burrows and moves primarily at night. Rare.

### Woodhouse's Toad

(*Bufo woodhousii*)

2 - 4". Occurs in a wide range of habitats. Found along river bottoms and dry areas next to marshes, preferring sandy areas. Common.

*Bullfrog,*  
K. Harris



### **Cope's Gray Treefrog**

*(Hyla chrysoscelis)*

1 - 2". A variety of habitats are used, including small wooded areas, bottom-land forests, and trees along prairie streams. Abundant.

### **Western Chorus Frog**

*(Pseudacris triseriata)*

1 - 1.5". In general, found in prairies, on agricultural lands, river floodplains, and edges of marshes. Shallow bodies of water are needed for breeding. Abundant.

### **Plains Leopard Frog**

*(Rana blairi)*

2 - 3". Marshes, small ditches, and small ponds are preferred habitats. Wanders well away from water into meadows. Abundant.

### **American Bullfrog**

*(Rana catesbeiana)*

3 - 6". Prefers large water bodies. Burrows in bottom sediments in winter, like other frogs. Abundant.

### **Plains Spadefoot**

*(Spea bombifrons)*

1 - 2". Found in open grasslands or floodplains. Uses burrows in sandy soil, emerging at night. Abundant.



*Gray Treefrog,*  
M. Jeffords©



*Bullfrog,*  
USFWS

## **Reptiles**

Reptiles include lizards, snakes, and turtles. They have dry skins, usually with scales or scutes. They typically lay shelled eggs on land.



*5-Lined Skink,*  
USFWS

## **Lizards**

### **Six-lined Racerunner**

*(Cnemidophorus sexlineatus)*

6 - 9". Usually found in open areas with sand or loose soil, but also frequent other areas. Rare.

### **Common Five-lined Skink**

*(Eumeces fasciatus)*

5 - 8". Usually found in damp habitats with rotting stumps and logs, rock piles and decaying debris in or near woods. Rare.

### **Great Plains Skink**

*(Eumeces obsoletus)*. 6 - 13". Secretive. Found on grassy or partially wooded hillsides as well as open plains, with rocks in the soil for shelter. Rare.

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## **Snakes**

### **Eastern Yellow-bellied Racer**

*(Coluber constrictor flaviventris)*

23 - 50". Found in open woods, fields, and grasslands. Abundant.

### **Prairie Ring-necked Snake**

*(Diadophis punctatus arnyi)*

10 - 14". Found in damp areas near swamps, springs, and on wooded hillsides with rocks and logs for shelter. Abundant.

### **Black Ratsnake**

*(Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta)*

42 - 72". Found from wooded hillsides to open areas. Often take residence in hollow trees. Abundant.

### **Western Foxsnake**

*(Elaphe vulpina)*

36 - 54". Found in prairies, stream valleys, woods, farmlands, and natural wet areas. Common. State endangered.

### **Prairie Kingsnake**

(*Lampropeltis calligaster calligaster*)

30 - 42". Found on grassland prairies and open woodlands. Common.

### **Red Milksnake**

(*Lampropeltis triangulum sypila*)

21 - 28". Secretive. Found in woodlands and rocky hillsides to more open areas. Rare.

### **Diamond-backed Watersnake**

(*Nerodia rhombifer*)

30 - 48". Found in aquatic habitats. Eats fish, frogs, toads and salamanders. Abundant.

### **Bullsnake**

(*Pituophis catenifer sayi*)

37 - 72". Found on prairies, pastures and in fields, and at times along river bluffs. Rare.

### **Graham's Crayfish Snake**

(*Regina grahamii*)

18 - 28". Secretive. Found along marshes, ponds and prairie streams. Common.

### **Eastern Massasauga**

(*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*)

18 - 30". The only venomous snake on the refuge. Found on wet prairies and marshes. Common. Federal candidate for listing; State endangered.

### **Texas Brownsnake**

(*Storeria dekayi texana*)

9 - 13". Found in marshes, moist woods, and hillsides. Secretive. Feeds on earthworms, snails and insects. Abundant.

### **Orange-striped Ribbonsnake**

(*Thamnophis proximus proximus*)

18 - 26". Semi-aquatic, found near streams, pools, bogs and swamps. Abundant.

### **Plains Gartersnake**

(*Thamnophis radix*)

15 - 28". Found in river valleys, prairie ponds and sloughs. Abundant.

### **Red-sided Gartersnake**

(*Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*)

18 - 26". Generally found near water in prairie swales, ditches, and ponds. Abundant.



### **Turtles**

#### **Midland Smooth Softshell**

(*Apalone mutica mutica*)

4 - 14". Found in streams to rivers, as well as lakes. May bask on sandbars or mudflats. Rare.

#### **Eastern Spiny Softshell**

(*Apalone spinifera spinifera*)

5 - 17". Considered a river turtle, but also occurs in lakes and other quiet bodies of water. Basks on logs and banks. Rare.

#### **Snapping Turtle**

(*Chelydra serpentina*)

8 - 14". Found in permanent bodies of water. Rarely basks. Omnivorous; food may include fish reptiles, birds, and mammals. Abundant.



#### **Western Painted Turtle**

(*Chrysemys picta bellii*)

3 - 7". Usually found in shallow water with much vegetation, and soft muddy bottoms in ponds and marshes. Bask on logs and rocks. Abundant.



#### **Blanding's Turtle**

(*Emydoidea blandingii*)

5 - 7". Aquatic, but may wander on land close to marshes or small streams. Basks on muskrat houses and logs. Rare. State endangered.

#### **Ornate Box Turtle**

(*Terrapene ornata ornata*)

4 - 5". Terrestrial; found on prairies. Burrows. Primarily insectivorous. Rare.

#### **Red-eared Slider**

(*Trachemys scripta elegans*)

5 - 8". Found in quiet waters with a muddy bottom and much vegetation. Basks on logs or other places above water. Common.





The ranges of the following species of amphibians and reptiles include the refuge; however, they have not been observed there.

**Great Plains Narrow-mouthed Toad**  
(*Gastrophryne olivacea*)

**Northern Leopard Frog**  
(*Rana pipiens*)

**Western Slender Glass Lizard**  
(*Ophisaurus attenuatus attenuatus*)

**Western Wormsnake**  
(*Carphophis vermis*)

**Great Plains Ratsnake**  
(*Elaphe guttata emoryi*)

**Eastern Hog-nosed Snake**  
(*Heterodon platirhinos*)

**Speckled Kingsnake**  
(*Lampropeltis getula holbrooki*)



**Common Watersnake**  
(*Nerodia sipedon sipedon*)

**Lined Snake**  
(*Tropidoclonion lineatum*)

**False Map Turtle**  
(*Graptemys pseudogeographica*)